

CHENEY

State Park



A Kid's Guide to Spring Creek Nature Trail

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IMAGINATION INVESTIGATION



Did you know that you have everything you need to be an explorer? Your imagination holds the tools with which you make discoveries in the world around you. As you walk along this nature trail, imagine yourself on a journey and try to see, hear, smell, and touch new things (no tasting please!).

There are 15 signs along the trail. At each sign, stop and find the same sign name in this booklet for a clue to the mysteries along Spring Creek Nature Trail.

MIXED PRAIRIE

Step off the path and sit down in the tall prairie grass. Think of yourself as a cottontail rabbit. What color is your fur? Does it help you blend in (camouflage)? If you hold still, perhaps a hungry coyote won't spot you.

FALSE INDIGO

In the spring, the flowers of this bush attract many insects. Do see any that are black and yellow or black and orange? These are warning colors in nature. Can you think of a way that people use these warning colors?

LEAFLETS 3-LET IT BE

Poison ivy can cause an itchy rash. It has three leaves and reddish stems. If you touch poison ivy, DON'T PANIC! Wash with cold water and soap within the first hour.

WOODPECKER HOLE

Every creature needs a habitat, a place they can find food, water, shelter, and enough space. This wetland provides homes for many different creatures. As you hike this trail, circle the animals you see on the list below. Your list will vary depending on the season and the time of day.

Duck

Hawk

Goose

Owl

Butterfly

Bee

Dragonfly

Fly

Fish

Egret

Snake

Heron

Beaver

Crayfish

Deer

FIRE DAMAGE

Fire can be a very dangerous part of nature but it can be beneficial as well. Although fire killed this tree it also created a new habitat. This dead tree is now a home to many insects and other small creatures.



TREE RINGS

We can tell that this tree had many birthdays because there is one dark circle on this stump for every year the tree was alive. Count the circles on the tree stump pictured below to find out its age.

Age of the tree _____



EASTERN COTTONWOOD

Close your eyes and open your ears. Do you hear a waterfall? Look up. What you hear is the sound of cottonwood leaves smacking together. Can you see the shape of the leaves? If so, circle the similar shape below.



WOOD DUCK BOX

Are you afraid of heights? If you were a baby wood duck, you would have to jump from the hole in this box to reach the water below where your mama was waiting.

FUNGUS

These trees are slowly decaying back into the soil. Check off anything you see that helps break down the tree.

- Ants or termites
- Fungus: mushrooms or mold
- Insects squiggles (tracks) left in the wood
- Peeling bark

BLACK WILLOW

Scientists use shapes to identify different plants. Look at the leaves on this willow tree. Circle the shape that looks most like the leaves. Is this different than the one you circled earlier?



SCREECH OWL BOX

Would you believe it? The adult owl that lives here is only the size of a can of soda pop!



EVIDENCE OF BEAVER

If you have ever gone swimming, you know that to stay underwater, you must hold your breath. A beaver can hold its breath for 15 minutes or 900 seconds! Write down how many seconds you can you hold your breath.

Seconds _____

GREEN ASH

This is a great place to stop and look for tracks along the sandy trail. Circle the tracks that you find.



Deer



Raccoon



Dog

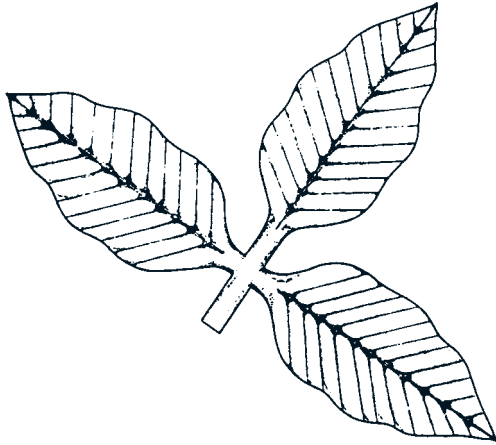
CATALPA

Check out the giant leaves on this tree. In the spring-time the tree is covered in large white flowers but in the fall, long, green bean-like seedpods dangle from the branches.

POISON IVY

Poison ivy...what's the point? Although it causes a rash that makes people itch, did you know that many creatures depend on it? Deer will eat the leaves and birds love the berries, yet neither animal is harmed.

Color the picture of poison ivy below.



VIRGINIA CREEPER

Jeepers! Creepers! Is this poison ivy too? Compare the leaves of this tree to the picture of poison ivy above. Do you notice any differences in the number of leaves on a stem? List the number you see. (The number will vary from spring to summer.)

Leaves on a stem _____

Look Again!

For a fresh look, turn around and travel through the trail from the opposite direction.

Or, take a “Micro-Hike.” Get close to the ground and pretend you are a caterpillar—is the grass a jungle? Is a grain of sand a boulder?

Or, hike the trail at sunrise. Many animals are crepuscular, which means they only come out at low light times of the day. You will have a better chance of seeing muskrat at sunset and sunrise than at any other time of day.

Or, travel the trail during different seasons of the year. Not only will the colors, smells, and sounds be different but the animals present will also change due to migration and hibernation.

This project developed by the
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